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**Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Announces Development
of Small Business Assistance Project**

Interactive Website to Put Information at Users' Fingertips

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership (ENRP) today announced the approval of a project to improve and enhance the development of small business in Niagara and Erie Counties.

"Our research found 275 programs and 60 agencies providing small business assistance in the two counties," ENRP Co-Chair Barry Weinstein, MD said, "It's clear there are an abundance of programs out there, but it is difficult for the user to try and find them, let alone figure out for which ones they might be qualified to apply."

The centerpiece of the project is an interactive website that will allow users to enter information about themselves and the type of business they want to open, and in turn receive a list of 'best chance' programs and agencies, along with their contact information. "This will give people a single point of access to this wealth of information, and put it at their fingertips," according to ENRP Co-Chair Clyde Burmaster. "It will significantly cut down on their search time." Users will also be able to access a full list of agencies and programs, as well as a calendar of upcoming events.

"The key now is to develop this project in conjunction with the agencies to assure it is a success," added ENRP Economic Development Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus. "We want to form a working group for the website's development, then keep that group working on items like peer review of business plans and the strengthening of individual programs."

ENRP (founded in 1998) is an ad hoc subcommittee of the Niagara and Erie County Legislatures, in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors, and is administrated through the University at Buffalo Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth.